



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Bishop Field Office
351 Pacu Lane Suite 100
Bishop, California 93514
www.blm.gov/ca/bishop



DECISION RECORD

Green Creek Burn Area Habitat Rehabilitation DOI-BLM-CA-C070-2016-0004-CX

Introduction and Background

The Bureau of Land Management, Bishop Field Office intends to implement post-fire re-vegetation treatments to augment natural re-vegetation within the 27 acres of BLM-managed public lands burned by the Green Creek Fire during September 2015. The Green Creek Fire burned intensely, consuming nearly all the mature sagebrush and bitterbrush vegetation. The proposed treatments would work toward re-establishing the native plant community of the burn area.

The proposed project would use both seeding and seedling planting to accomplish the re-vegetation. Seeding would be conducted by either hand broadcasting and raking the seed into the soil or by using a UTV or ATV with an attached seed spreader and small harrow to spread the seed and work the seed into the soil. The entire 27 acre burned area may be seeded with native seed appropriate for the site. Species to be seeded include, but are not limited to: big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*), bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*), Indian ricegrass (*Stipa hymenoides*), and bottlebrush squirreltail (*Elymus elymoides*).

Seedling planting would be conducted by propagating locally collected species such as bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*) and sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) and using shovels or augers (hand or power) to dig holes 4 to 6 inches in diameter and approximately 12 inches deep. Seedlings would be planted into the burn area at a density of approximately 300 to 600 seedlings per acre. It is expected that less than half of the total area would be planted. Vexar mesh tubing may be placed around seedlings to protect them from herbivory.

Work would occur anytime favorable seeding or planting conditions exist and consistent with the Bishop Resource Management Plan (RMP) and project stipulations.

The purpose of the proposed rehabilitation activities is to enhance the natural vegetation regrowth within the burned area. These activities are needed due to the loss of vegetation caused by the fire and the possibility of natural recovery of native vegetation being impeded by colonization of cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) or other non-native plant species. Reducing the chance of colonization by cheatgrass and restoring native plant species would improve the

quality of the burned area habitat for sagebrush obligate wildlife species such as the greater sage-grouse.

Land Use Plan Conformance

The proposed action has been reviewed for conformance with the Bishop Resource Management Plan (RMP) approved March 25, 1993. While activities of the proposed action are not specifically provided for in the RMP, they are clearly consistent with the RMP which states:

- Manage candidate species, sensitive species and other species of management concern in a manner to avoid the need for listing as state or federal endangered or threatened (Standard Operating Procedures, RMP, page 12).
- Manage sagebrush-bitterbrush areas within 2 miles of sage-grouse leks to meet desired plant community goals (Area Wide RMP Decisions, RMP page 17).

Decision and Rationale

Based on the information provided in the categorical exclusion documentation DOI-BLM-CAC-070-2016-0004-CX and the required Review of Extraordinary Circumstances, I have determined: 1) that this action is categorically excluded from further environmental analysis and documentation under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended; and 2) that implementation of this project as designed would not result in any significant adverse environmental impacts. I have also determined that this action conforms to, and is consistent with, the overall guidance and management direction provided by the Bishop Resource Management Plan (RMP), approved March 25, 1993.

Therefore, it is my decision to implement the project as designed, and subject to, the following project stipulations as outlined in the categorical exclusion documentation:

1. No cultural properties will be negatively affected by this project. All cultural sites located within the proposed units will be field verified and Standard Resource Protection Measures (SRPM) applied commensurate to project activity, on a site specific basis to ensure a Finding of No Adverse Effect.
2. Standard Protection Measures will be monitored for effectiveness during project implementation.
3. If un-identified artifacts are discovered during implementation, all project work will cease in the vicinity of the site, and the project director and archaeologist will be notified.
4. All seeding and planting associated with the proposed treatments would utilize native seed and plants that are adapted to the project area.

5. Vehicular access would be restricted to existing roads. Cross-country travel with a UTV or ATV would only be permitted during seeding and planting activities.
6. Treatments associated with proposed action would not include; chaining, the use of pesticides or herbicides or the conversion of timber type or non-forest to forest land.
7. If project activities would take place during migratory bird nesting season (March 15 to July 30), a nesting bird survey would be conducted at least one week before the onset of project activities to determine the presence or absence of nesting birds. If nesting birds are observed, work activities would be avoided within 100 feet of active nests until it has been determined that the young have left the nest.
8. Based on Area-wide direction in the RMP (page 17), stating "Seasonal Protection within 2 miles of an active sage-grouse lek from 5/1 to 6/30", no project activities will occur between May 1st and June 30th.
9. Motorized tools would not be used for treatments from 3/1 to 5/1 to limit noise disturbance to lekking sage-grouse.

Administrative Remedies

Administrative remedies may be available to those who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. Appeals may be made to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of the Interior, Board of Land Appeals (Board) in strict compliance with the regulations in 43 CFR Part 4. Notices of appeal must be filed in this office within 30 days after publication of this decision. If a notice of appeal does not include a statement of reasons, such statement must be filed with this office and the Board within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed. The notice of appeal and any statement of reasons, written arguments, or briefs must also be served upon the Regional Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2800 Cottage Way, E-1712, Sacramento, CA 95825.

for 
Steven Nelson
Bishop Field Manager

11/16/2015
Date